

INDIANA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Staff Interaction with Students

Policy/Procedure O-50

Policy Statement

All staff at the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ISBVI), including full and part-time employees, contractual staff, education staff, students, and volunteers, will maintain professional interactions with students that promote the dignity and self-worth of the individuals and maintain objectivity and professional roles and responsibilities.

Procedure

Each ISBVI staff member will uphold ethical standards when working with children/adolescents and their families and will follow the mission and code of ethics of the school.

Verbal Interventions

- Staff members will engage in positive, educational and therapeutic interventions with children following guidelines established by ISBVI.
- Staff will encourage professional relationships with children and adolescents that are in accordance with their position or professional role.
- Staff will treat all students in a fair and equitable manner and ensure each has equal opportunities to earn privileges or rewards.

Physical Interventions

- Physical interventions with children and adolescents are permitted in the following ways and circumstances:
 - Pats on the back, shoulder or arms to get a child's attention and to reinforce, support, and encourage the success of the child
 - Physical embrace during time of student emotional duress that is age and developmentally appropriate and of an infrequent and non-routine nature that would be deemed appropriate by one's professional peers and supervisor(s)
 - Physical restraint in emergency situations consistent with policies and procedures on physical restraint only (see Physical Intervention of Students Policy 0-46)
- Other uses of physical restraint are not permitted.
- Sexual contact of a physical nature as well as sexual contact of a non-physical nature which may include, but not be limited to: conversations; phone calls, texts, emails and other communications are prohibited. Social networking with, for or about students is not permitted.

Staff Relationships with Students

- As a general rule, staff should not provide personal information to students, including home telephone numbers, cellular phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses, social networking profiles, home addresses or other means for personal contact. Staff relationships with students outside of assigned work responsibilities are not permitted unless approved by the staff member's supervisor and approved by the parent and/or

guardian as appropriate.

- Staff should discuss with his/her supervisor any acquaintances with a student outside of the school (such as neighbor, family friend or relative) so that adjustments or accommodations may be made in staff assignments, where necessary.
- Staff will not use any personal information for students outside of their professional responsibilities including photographs, medical information or other confidential information (i.e., posting student photographs or other personal information online as well as through social networking is NOT permitted, unless permission is granted by the Superintendent/Appointing Authority).
- Staff is strongly encouraged to not communicate with students using personal communication devices. Realizing the communication methods of our society continue to evolve and change, i.e. many individuals no longer have land lines and utilize cell phones and texting has become a more acceptable form of communication, it may prove necessary to utilize these forms of communication in an emergency and/or a professional capacity. These communications, as other communications, will be of a professional nature and will be documented accordingly.

Contact with Former Students

A former student is a student who was previously enrolled at ISBVI for educational services and has transferred, graduated or withdrawn from the school.

- Only staff assigned follow-up responsibilities should initiate contact with a former student.
- All other contacts (either by phone, letter or any other digital means) to staff members by former students are deemed professional work-related contacts.
- Letters, e-mail, and other correspondence received by staff from former students and their families must be placed in the individual's student record.
- Letters, e-mail, and other correspondence written to former students by staff in response are considered work-related and must be copied and filed in the individual's student record.
- Letters, e-mail, and other communications to staff members who are no longer employed at ISBVI will be documented as received within the student record and returned to the former student or guardian.
- Contact received by an employee from a former student must be reported to the employee's supervisor so that any necessary follow-up may be made with the former student, his/her family or guardian, or involved agencies by designated staff.
- If the former student is experiencing a crisis, the staff role is to provide verbal support and encourage the former student to seek care by accessing community resources and referring the situation to the appropriate social worker. Actions should be documented in the student record by the Social Worker.

Violations

Staff members who observe inappropriate or unprofessional interactions between students and other staff members must immediately report such incidents to their immediate or higher level supervisor. Violations of this policy may result in administrative and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and reporting to appropriate agencies and authorities.

The ISBVI Board directs the ISBVI Superintendent to ensure ISBVI staff complies with this policy by:

- 1) Providing ISBVI staff written notice and documenting their awareness and receipt of these documents by obtaining their signatures;
- 2) Affording initial and periodic on-going training to ISBVI staff on the ISBVI Board Policy on Staff Interaction with Students.

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Revised: 3/21/11, 10/21/13, **10/22/18**